

Message Text

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ACTION OES-06

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 AID-05 HEW-04 CIAE-00 INR-07
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R 131211Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2682
INFO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY DACCA
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY KTHMANDU
USCINCPAC
AMCONSUL BOMBAY
AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
AMCONSUL MADRAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 NEW DELHI 5293

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

EO 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PGOV, PINR, IN
SUBJ: BIO DATA ON RAJ NARAIN, MINISTER OF HEALTH
AND FAMILY WELFARE

REF: NEW DELHI 4635

1. THIS MESSAGE SUPPLEMENTS BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION
PROVIDED IN REFTEL:

2. CURRICULUM VITAE: RAJ NARAIN WAS BORN IN A VILLAGE
NEAR VARANASI (U.P.) IN 1917. A GRADUATE OF BENARES
HINDU UNIVERSITY, HE ALSO HOLDS A LAW DEGREE FROM THAT
INSTITUTION BUT HAS NEVER PRACTICED AT THE BAR. RAJ
NARAIN JOINED THE FREEDOM STRUGGLE WHILE STILL A
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STUDENT AND IN THE 1942 "QUIT INDIA" MOVEMENT INDULGED
IN ARSON AND OTHER VIOLENT ACTIVITIES. HE WAS LONG
ASSOCIATED WITH THE CONGRESS SOCIALIST PARTY (CSP, THE
PREDECESSOR OF THE PRESENT SOCIALIST PARTY. WHEN THE
CSP SPLIT FROM THE CONGRESS PARTY IN 1946 HE FOLLOWED
SUIT. HE CLAIMS THAT THE LATE SOCIALIST LEADER,
DR RAM MANOHAR LOHIA, AND J.P. NARAYAN (IN THAT ORDER)

WERE HIS POLITICAL MENTORS. RAJ NARAIN WAS SECRETARY OF THE UP SOCIALIST PARTY (1948-51), PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY (QOYQ-64), AND GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE SAMYUKTA (UNITED) SOCIALIST PARTY (1965-66). IN 1974 HE MERGED HIS FACTION OF THE SAMYUKTA SOCIALIST PARTY WITH CHARAN SINGH'S NEWLY-FORMED BLD AND WAS APPOINTED ONE OF THE PARTY'S VICE PRESIDENTS. RAJ NARAIN BEGAN HIS CAREER IN PUBLIC LIFE IN 1952, WHEN HE WAS ELECTED TO THE UP STATE ASSEMBLY. LATER HE BECAME LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION IN THE ASSEMBLY. A MEMBER OF THE RAJYA SABHA FROM 1966 TO 1972, HE WAS AGAIN ELECTED TO PARLIAMENT'S UPPER HOUSE IN 1974. HE RESIGNED HIS RAJYA SABHA SEAT FOLLOWING HIS VICTORY OVER MRS. GANDHI IN THE RECENT LOK SABHA ELECTIONS.

3. RAJ NARAIN HAS BEEN VARIOUSLY DESCRIBED AS THE "WILD MAN" OF INDIAN POLITICS. HE HAS BEEN A PERPETUAL AGITATOR AND GADFLY. AS HIS OFFICIAL BIO DATA DECLARES, HE HAS PARTICIPATED IN AGITATIONS INVOLVING STUDENTS, WORKERS, HARIJANS AND PEASANTS FOR THE "REMOVAL OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DISPARITIES." HE CLAIMS TO HAVE BEEN ARRESTED YEAR AFTER YEAR SINCE INDEPENDENCE AND PUTS HIS TALLY OF ARRESTS AT 58. HE WAS LAST DETAINED FOLLOWING THE PROCLAMATION OF THE EMERGENCY IN JUNE 1975, AND WAS ONLY RELEASED IN EARLY FEBRUARY OF THIS YEAR, JUST DAYS BEFORE THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN GOT UNDER WAY. DURING HIS YEARS AS AN MLA IN UP, HE FREQUENTLY DISRUPTED PROCEEDINGS OF THE STATE ASSEMBLY BY SUCH ANTICS AS MARCHING TOWARD THE SPEAKER'S CHAIR

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WITH THE APPARENT INTENTION OF STRIKING HIM. HE WOULD REFUSE TO COMPLY WITH THE SPEAKER'S ORDERING HIM OUT OF THE HOUSE, AND AT TIMES IT REQUIRED SIX MEMBERS OF THE WATCH AND WARD STAFF TO LIFT HIM UP AND CARRY HIM OUT. (HE WEIGHED AROUND 300 POUNDS AT THE TIME). EVEN IN THE RAJYA SABHA HE USED TO CREATE DISORDER AND DISRUPTION. GIVEN HIS REPUTATION AS A TROUBLE-MAKER, MRS GANDHI WAS REPORTED TO BE FURIOUS WHEN THE OPPOSITION ALLIANCE SELECTED HIM AS HER OPPONENT FOR THE RAE BARELLI SEAT IN THE 1971 ELECTIONS. SHE TOOK IT AS AN INSULT AND IS REPORTED TO HAVE REMARKED THAT RAJ NARAIN'S CANDIDACY WAS INTENDED TO HUMILIATE HER TO THE MAXIMUM EXTENT POSSIBLE.

4. RAJ NARAIN'S CHALLENGE OF MRS GANDHI'S 1971 RAE BARELLI VICTORY IN THE ALLAHABAD HIGH COURT PROPELLED HIM INTO THE NATIONAL SPOTLIGHT. THE COURT'S FINAL VERDICT ON JUNE 12, 1975 SETTING ASIDE MRS GANDHI'S ELECTION MAY HAVE BEEN ONE OF THE FACTORS LEADING TO THE

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DECLARATION OF THE EMERGENCY TWO WEEKS LATER. IN ANY
EVENT, RAJ NARAIN AGAIN CHALLENGED MRS GANDHI IN THE
RECENT ELECTIONS AND DEFEATED HER BY 55,000 VOTES,
A VICTORY WHICH EARNED HIM THE TITLE OF RAE BARELLI".
WE UNDERSTAND FROM TRAVELLERS IN UP DURING THE CAMPAIGN
THAT HE WAS RELATIVELY MORE SUBDUED THAN IN THE 1971
ELECTION. PRESS REPORTS HAVE NOTED THAT HE NEVER
PERSONALLY ATTACKED MRS GANDHI, BUT RATHER CONFINED HIS
REMARKS TO POLICY ISSUES. HE ATTRACTED ENTHUSIASTIC
AND RAPT AUDIENCES IN THE DISTRICT, ESPECIALLY WHEN HE
PORTRAYED THE CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL SITUATION IN THE
CONTEXT OF THE ANCIENT HINDU EPICS. RAJ NARAIN HAS
BECOME INTENSELY RELIGIOUS AND IS ALWAYS TALKING ABOUT
HIS BELIEF IN GOD AND DIVINE WILL.

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5. RAJ NARAIN STRONGLY RESISTED BEING INDUCTED INTO MORARJI DESAI'S CABINET, APPARENTLY PREFERRING TO REMAIN OUTSIDE OFFICIAL RESPONSIBILITY TO ACT AS A WATCHDOG OVER THE NEW GOVERNMENT, FREE TO CRITICIZE ITS ACTIONS AND EVEN TO LAUNCH AGITATIONS IF REQUIRED. DESAI, WITH HELP FROM J.P. NARAYAN, EVENTUALLY FORCED HIM TO ACCEPT THE HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE PORTFOLIO, PERHAPS IN THE HOPE THAT HE COULD BE MORE EASILY RESTRAINED AS A MEMBER OF THE CABINET THAN AS A TEMPESTUOUS OUTSIDER. GEORGE FERNANDES MAY HAVE BEEN FORCED INTO THE CABINET FOR SIMILAR REASONS. IN ANY EVENT, MANY OBSERVERS REGARD HIM AS UNSTABLE, UNPREDICTABLE, UNRELIABLE -- IN SHORT AS A RABBLE ROUSER WHO IS POTENTIALLY DAGEROUS. IN HIS BRIEF SERVICE THUS FAR AS HEALTH MINISTER HE HAS ALREADY MADE SEVERAL CONTRADICTORY STATEMENTS AND HIS BEHAVIOR HAS PRODUCED SOME CRITICAL REACTION. FOR EXAMPLE, HE CAUSED AN OUTCRY IN PARLIAMENT WHEN HE SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD PAY RS. 5000 TO EACH VICTIM OF COMPULSORY STERILIZATION. HIS REMARK DREW REJOINDERS THAT THE GOVERNMENT COULD GO BROKE OVER SUCH A COMPENSATION SCHEME. RAJ NARAIN LATER CHANGED HIS STATEMENT TO INDICATE THAT THE PAYMENT WOULD BE MADE TO THE FAMILIES OF PERSONS WHO HAD DIED AS A RESULT OF FORCED STERILIZATION.

6. HE IS MARRIED AND HAS THREE SONS, ALTHOUGH HIS OFFICIAL LISTING IN THE RAJYA SABHA WHO'S WHO MAKES NO MENTION OF THIS FACT. FOR SEVERAL YEARS HE HAS SPORTED A GREEN BANDANA WRAPPED AROUND HIS HEAD, WHICH GIVES HIM THE APPEARANCE OF BEING A DACOIT. THE REAL REASON FOR THE BANDANA, HOWEVER, MAY BE TO HIDE A LARGE WITE PATCH ON HIS SCALP CAUSED BY SKIN DISEASE. RAJ NARAIN HAS ALSO SPORTED A SCRUFFY BEARD WHICH HAS FURTHER ENHANCED HIS BANDIT'S IMAGE. THE BEARD WAS THE PRODUCT OF A VOW NEVER TO SHAVE UNTIL HE HAD FINALLY VANQUISHED MRS GANDHI. HAVING WON IN RAE
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BARELLI, HE RECENTLY MADE A PILGRIMAGE TO A SHRINE IN UP WHERE THE PRIESTS SHAVED OFF THE BEARD IN A RELIGIOUS CEREMONY. HE IS ADAMANT ON THE USE OF HINDI AND, ALTHOUGH HE IS ABLE TO SPEAK ENGLISH, HE RESOLUTELY REFUSES TO USE IT ON MOST OCCASIONS.
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